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UNCLAS MADRID 002943

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

TO THE SECRETARY AND EUR DAN FRIED FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SP](#) [MARR](#)

SUBJECT: SPAIN: AFGHANISTAN TRAGEDY OFFERS OPPORTUNITY FOR
HIGHEST LEVEL OUTREACH

1. (SBU) The tragic loss of 17 Spanish military personnel in the helicopter crash in Afghanistan offers the opportunity for the US to reach out to the Spanish public through their senior leadership as we express our condolences on the loss of life and our support for Spain's continued commitment to the task in Afghanistan. Your outreach to Moratinos and Dan Fried's to National Security advisor Casajuana reinforced this message. They were both extremely grateful to receive the calls.

2. (SBU) President Zapatero has just appeared on national TV with a firm statement underscoring the courage of Spanish troops in a humanitarian mission to bring about peace and stability and an end to tyranny and violence in Afghanistan. He also saluted their efforts in Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo. At this point, Zapatero and Defense Minister Bono's rapid reaction seems aimed at maintaining public support for this Spanish Parliament-approved mission. They are also seeking to avert the kind of political controversy that embroiled the previous government over the alleged mismanagement of an Afghanistan related plane crash in 2003, in which 62 Spanish military personnel lost their lives. Personal outreach by the President to Zapatero, as the head of the Spanish government, would send a welcome public diplomacy signal as we work to create a positive environment in which the Spanish government can cooperate with the US on issues of vital concern to us. You will be in the best position to recommend the form and content of that personal outreach. As always, I am grateful for your support and that of our colleagues in EUR.

AGUIRRE